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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, June 19, 2003

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Mighty Mac Toll Decrease Closer to Reality *Senate passes Mackinac Bridge legislation*

Lansing, MI--Traveling across the Mackinac Bridge could soon become significantly easier on the pocketbook under legislation passed by the Senate on Wednesday.

The legislation, spear-headed by Sen. Jason Allen (R-Traverse City), will dedicate \$5.9 million in state funding to the Mackinac Bridge Authority to cover capital improvement costs and offset the toll increase instituted on May 1. In addition, the legislation provides toll exemptions for emergency vehicles and requires the Authority to hold additional public hearings in northern Michigan on reducing the current toll rates. The five bill package passed the Senate on a widely bi-partisan basis.

“The recent increases in tolls to cross the Mackinac Bridge put undue stress on the economies and families of northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula,” said Allen.

Since the bridge’s construction in the 1950’s, the state has not directly allocated any funds for repair or maintenance. This legislation is aimed at providing a consistent level of support to the ‘Mighty Mac’.

“It is time that the State of Michigan played a greater role and became partners in preserving and maintaining the Mackinac Bridge,” said Allen. “It is vital that this piece of our heritage and infrastructure is properly maintained and any tolls are kept as low as possible.”

(MORE)

The primary bill in the package forgives all debt the Mackinac Bridge Authority owes to the State of Michigan and requires the Mackinac Bridge Authority to investigate a new, lower toll structure. Other bills in the package will provide for the continued existence of the Mackinac Bridge Authority to oversee bridge maintenance and operations, dedicate state funds to the Authority, and create a toll exemption for emergency vehicles.

Allen, along with Rep. Scott Shackleton (R-Sault Ste. Marie), started working on the legislation shortly after the Mackinac Bridge Authority held public hearings on increasing the tolls last fall.

“I have enjoyed working with Representative Shackleton and the members of the Mackinac Bridge Authority to develop legislation that adequately addresses the needs of the bridge while keeping tolls affordable and reasonable,” said Allen.

The bills have been sent to the House of Representatives for their consideration and are expected to be referred to the House Transportation Committee. A similar package of bills was introduced in the House, led by Shackleton, and is also in the House Transportation Committee.

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AUDIO ADVISORY: Audio clips of Sen. Jason Allen are available on the internet at <http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/audiowire/> or by phone at (517) 373-4000.